

Fodder supplies looking better for Winter 2013



Silage making on the farm of Austin Stevenson, Killygordon, Co. Donegal

Possible PRSI hike for self-employed: economic tomfoolery ahead of the budget

ICSA president Gabriel Gilmartin has described the proposal for a hike in the PRSI rate for self-employed as "economic tomfoolery" on the run in to the budget. The proposal shows that some Government advisors are seriously detached from the reality facing many small businesses and farmers who are working night and day to keep the show going.

The forthcoming budget on October 15 will be a test of whether this Government means what it says when it cites increased export earnings from

the agri-food sector as a key element to economic recovery. It will also be a test of whether the Taoiseach means what he says when he proclaims that he wants this to be "the best little country in the world to do business." Finally, it will be a test of the Fine Gael promise not to hike taxes.

Already, we have seen successive budgets since 2008 take more and more in the form of both capital and payroll tax increases. Although some of the worst excesses happened under the previous Government in terms of extra taxes such as the USC, the trend to increased capital taxes

has continued under the current regime.

ICSA is strongly opposed to the relentless trend in recent budgets towards increased capital taxes and reduced thresholds, which is potentially leading to severe outcomes for inter-generational farm transfers.

ICSA believes that there has been too much focus on tax increases; increases in employment taxes such as the USC combined with an inflexible social welfare regime is hindering job creation in the agri-sector particularly in the case of short-term or seasonal workers

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The **Drystock Farmer**
is published by The
Irish Cattle and Sheep
Farmers' Association.

3 Gandon Court,
Fairgreen, Portlaoise

Edited by
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Advertising by
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Possible PRSI hike - continued from page 1

who could be taken off the dole.

Now a new proposal to raise the PRSI rate from 4% to 5.5% for the self-employed, including farmers, will be a test of whether the Government is serious about encouraging entrepreneurship and whether it has a coherent strategy for greater economic activity and increased exports.

The proposal also calls into question whether Fine Gael will uphold its policy of no tax increases on income. While technically PRSI is a separate charge, it is nonetheless a percentage cut off your income. What makes it particularly severe is that there is no tax credit to be set against it, and following last year's budget - in which the 0% PRSI thresholds were abolished - the PRSI rate applies to all income. Farmers are already hit by a minimum PRSI payment of €500 per annum regardless of income.

The proponents of this change suggest that the money raised could be used to improve benefits to the self-employed. However, the reality for farmers is that

most social welfare benefits will be means tested. Landowners will not be able to qualify for such means tested payments. In any event, the proposal does not allow for a Job Seekers Benefit to be paid to farmers, so in effect this is a straight tax hike with a very limited upside for farmers.

The downside is plain to see: an effective tax rate for some of 53.5%, and a top rate of 56.5% for self employed people. It is worth noting that self employed people already have a potentially higher marginal rate of tax on income over €100,000 due to the fact that they are hit with a higher Universal Social Charge (10%), compared to a maximum 7% for employees. Granted, in most cases farmers won't be worried about incomes in excess of €100,000, but they certainly will be worried about their PRSI rate going from 4% to 5.5% on all farm income.

Does the Government seriously believe that a tax rate of 53.5% encourages hard work and enterprise?

The budget will also be a test of Minister Coveney's influence at the cabinet table. Schemes such as REPS, Disadvantaged Area



Minister for Agriculture Simon Coveney speaking at ICSA's Annual Conference last year. The upcoming Budget will be test of Minister Coveney's influence at the Cabinet table

payments and the Suckler Welfare Scheme have all been decimated in various budgets over the past 5 years. It is surely time to stop this haemorrhage.

According to ICSA president Gabriel Gilmartin, "there should be scope for better funding for agri-environment schemes in 2014 and we have to shout stop

when it comes to the trend of cutting the Disadvantaged Area Scheme in recent budgets. Budgetary constraints have meant that farms in excess of 22 hectares did not qualify for the AEOS agri-environment scheme which really calls into question whether the Government is serious about enhancing the environment."

Credit squeeze getting worse on farms

The wider banking crisis and the plight of homeowners unable to meet their mortgage repayments is rightly a matter of much discussion in the media. It tends to mask, however, the difficulties caused by a general credit squeeze on business and farming, according to ICSA president Gabriel Gilmartin.

"The main banks have been quick to argue that they have ring-fenced hundreds of millions for farm loan consolidation, farm development and land purchase. This is true, but the funding tends to be more readily accessed by a small cohort of the most progressive or financially strong farmers. In any event, the

credit squeeze is not all about banks; it is also linked to the relationship between farmers and their other traditional creditors such as merchants who supply them with feed, fertiliser and hardware, and co-ops."

"The problem has been exacerbated this year by the huge additional expense incurred by farmers in dealing with the aftermath of an exceptionally wet 2012 and the resulting fodder crisis. Farmers have spent thousands extra on additional feed and it is this expenditure that is now causing problems."

"We are getting increased reports of farmers coming under immense pressure to sort out bills for meal and fertiliser. For

many suckler farmers, selling weanlings from now on will bring temporary relief but in many cases the receipts from the early and best weanlings will not come near being able to pay all the bills. The Minister needs to ensure that the Disadvantaged Area payment is paid as soon as possible and that all outstanding suckler welfare payments are made quickly. We also understand that there will be an advance payment of the Single Payment in October which is set to be a permanent feature of CAP. This will help cash flow."

It is now urgent that merchants and co-ops sit down with farmers who have difficulties and work out a plan to clear up debts over a phased period. ICSA would

appeal to these businesses to continue to supply farmers with much needed meal and fertiliser where the farmer is making a real effort to pay down debts.

Banks say that they are open for business but many farmers seem to have difficulty in sitting down with their banks to discuss better credit facilities. We would urge that farmers in difficulty contact their banks and we would also call on banks to ensure that farmers are given a fair hearing. It is essential that credit applications are processed as quickly as possible and in general, decisions on credit should be in the hands of the local bank branch where the sums involved are small relative to the farm assets in question.

President's Address

Gabriel Gilmartin - President, ICSA

It's hard to believe that it's that time of year again, with the National Ploughing Championships just around the corner. I look forward to meeting ICSA members over the course of the iconic event and this year we will have some very exciting opportunities and offers for members, prospective members and non-members at the ICSA stand, so make sure to come and visit us.

It is a huge relief to see strong fodder yields from fields up and down the country that were barely walkable this time last year. However, autumn is definitely in the air and despite the seeming abundance of fodder, it is still important to plan ahead to make sure you're prepared in advance for the possibility of an extended winter season.

CAP negotiations rumble on. ICSA is compiling a comprehensive response to the 44 questions contained in the Department of Agriculture's CAP consultation document. The deadline for submissions to the Department's consultation process is looming and we can expect to see some movement in October/November on issues such as the degree of internal convergence, the use of frontloading

and the application of greening measures.

This year the details of Budget 2014 will be announced earlier than usual - October 15th. We have more detail on this in our front page article but I want to reiterate the importance of Minister Coveney sticking up for farmers and fighting hard against further cuts to the already drastically-reduced Department of Agriculture budget.

Since the last issue of Drystock Farmer, there is an emerging problem with many farmers getting letters from the Department in recent weeks suggesting that the area on which they are claiming their Single Payment is inaccurate. They are facing hundreds and in many instances thousands of euros of retrospective fines if they accept the Department's letter. If they appeal, they are faced with the prospect of having their payments held up, perhaps until 2014. This is an outrageous assault on farmers who in most cases have relied on professional advisors to ensure that their applications were correct over the years. It is now essential that the Minister gets involved to sort out this problem.

The development of live exports remains of critical importance. As we outlined in the

last edition of Drystock Farmer, ICSA is working extremely hard on opening up new routes to market for Irish weanlings in particular. This work continues but it's a difficult process and we need more support from the Department on breaking down the barriers to exports.

The issue of disease levies is something that we feel needs to be re-examined, in light of the falling levels of disease - in particular scrapie. We have more detail on this on page 8 but



I want to highlight the fact that the number of scrapie-positive animals has fallen to miniscule proportions and it is definitely time to take a look at the levy.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to highlight the exclusive offer available to ICSA

members on the farm insurance, in association with Zurich and Sparrow Insurances. Representatives from both Zurich and Sparrows will be available to chat to in the ICSA stand throughout the Championships so do call in and find out more.

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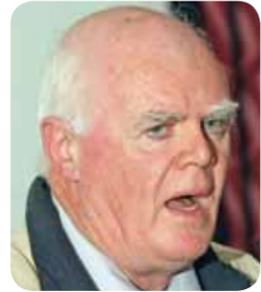
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ICSA SAYS GARDAÍ NEED BETTER RESOURCES TO DEAL WITH BORDER AREA CRIME



ICSA Connaught/Ulster vice president John Flynn

The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association says the Gardaí need better resources to deal with increasing crime, particularly theft, in the counties along the Border.

Responding to a warning issued by police to farmers on both sides of the Border following a spate of costly livestock thefts, ICSA's Connaught/Ulster vice president John Flynn said, "Anecdotal, there has been a significant increase in crime in the Border region and livestock theft is part of a bigger picture involving theft of diesel and machinery and other high-value items. It appears that the criminals involved are highly organised and have strong local knowledge and it is clear that the Gardaí need far better resources to tackle this."

ICSA'S CONTINUED OPPOSITION TO CLOSURE OF ROSCOMMON DVO

The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association is continuing to oppose any moves to close the public office of Roscommon's District Veterinary Office. An ICSA delegation met with senior local Department of Agriculture officials at the DVO recently, along with representatives from a number of local marts, live

exporters and local vets.

Charles Clarke, a member of the ICSA national executive, said, "I know that DVOs are being closed to the public around the country in efforts to cut costs but there are several special factors that need to be taken into consideration in the case of the Roscommon office."

"For one thing, the broadband infrastructure in the county is very poor so in many cases switching to online forms is simply not an option. That's before you consider that there are a great many older farmers in the area who would not be familiar enough with computerised systems to be able to carry out their business online. On top of that, the sheep recording system is not yet available online."

"There is also the distance issue – it seems the Department plans to move the public services to Naas and that would be an enormous distance to travel for Roscommon farmers."

Mr Clarke also highlighted the fears of local vets that the loss of the local DVO would jeopardise the progress that has been made on issues such as TB eradication in the area.

ICSA CALLS FOR COMPULSORY FERTILITY TESTING FOR EUROSTAR RAMS

The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association says pre-sale fertility testing for Eurostar-rated rams should be compulsory.

Sheep producers taking part in the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme (STAP), must have a Eurostar-rated ram for breeding, and concern

is being expressed by both ICSA president Gabriel Gilmartin and sheep chair Paul Brady that non-performing Eurostar rams, purchased at a relatively high price, are costing farmers a serious amount of time and money. "Considering the ram is kept for six weeks after purchase before being left in with the ewes, then it would be another three weeks before you discover he is not performing, and add to that the time it takes to go back to the breeder, get a fertility test and come to an agreement – you would be looking at a delay of up to 12 weeks or a whole breeding cycle," Mr Gilmartin said.

"Perhaps it's time to look at compulsory testing for all rams but I would be especially concerned with the Eurostar rams, given their higher value. When you're paying a premium price for a premium product I think that the buyer should have as much information about the animal as possible available, and that includes fertility and other things such as their feeding regime," he concluded.

ICSA: TEN METRE WATERWAY BUFFER ZONES COULD COST €3.5 BILLION



ICSA rural development chair John Barron

The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association has strongly criticised the suggestion that a ten metre buffer zone should be created around every

river, stream and lake in Ireland, saying it could cost in the region of €3.5 billion to implement.

ICSA rural development chairman, John Barron, says the call by Friends of the Irish Environment would effectively decommission thousands of hectares of productive Irish farmland, bringing with it an enormous cost.

"A conservative estimate would suggest that there are over 70,000 kilometres of waterway in Ireland, and that figure excludes the many thousands of hectares of lakes. To create 10 metre buffer zones on each side of each river and stream would imply the decommissioning of over 14 thousand hectares of mostly productive land. ICSA estimates that the loss of this ground would represent a loss of up to €3.5 billion worth of agricultural land and there would be an additional cost associated with fencing it off."

"The question is how can this be realistically funded? It is plain to see that this is a completely unrealistic and unworkable proposal. There would be a far better return from upgrading sewage treatment infrastructure," Mr Barron concluded.

ICSA: WE'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN WE SEE IT ON HORSEMEAT PROSECUTIONS

ICSA beef chairman Edmond Phelan has said "we'll believe it when we see it" in response to the possibility of prosecutions arising from the horsemeat scandal. Mr Phelan was speaking in the aftermath of criticism from British MPs on the lack of



ICSA beef committee chair Edmond Phelan

prosecutions and the reply by Minister Coveney that it takes time to build a case.

"Farmers are cynical about the different treatment that they get from the authorities compared to the way in which meat companies are being dealt with. If a farmer breaches any minor regulation, even down to small paperwork errors, there are severe financial consequences. Yet when there are serious issues around horsemeat being passed off as beef, there seems to be no urgency about penalties. Farmers think it's one law for the little people and another law for the big boys in the meat industry."

ICSA PAYS TRIBUTE TO SEÁN MAC CONNELL

Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association president Gabriel Gilmartin has paid tribute to the former Irish Times agriculture correspondent, Seán Mac Connell, who passed away recently.

Mr Gilmartin said, "During his career as agriculture correspondent, Seán Mac Connell demonstrated a sharp insight into the agri-food sector and was a keen observer of its politics."

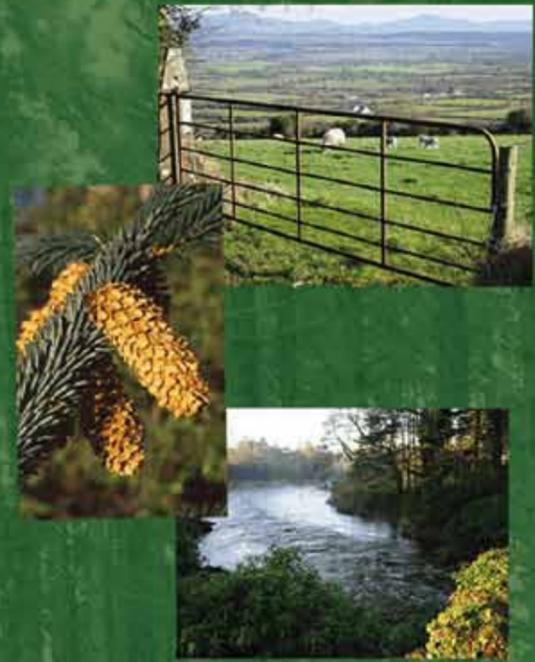
On behalf of ICSA, Mr Gilmartin expressed sympathy to Mr Mac Connell's family, friends and colleagues.

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product can work for you. They are committed to delivering excellent customer service and to dealing with all insurance queries promptly and efficiently.

ICSA president Gabriel Gilmartin said that farmers should always shop around and he was delighted that the association could deliver an exclusive €75 which would be in addition to any deal negotiated with Sparrow. "It makes sense to get a quote from Sparrow - it could be the most financially rewarding thing you'll do all day."

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THIRD LEVEL GRANTS

YOUNG FARMER OF THE YEAR

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Teagasc appoint Heads of Drystock & Sheep

Earlier this year Pearse Kelly was appointed as Head of Teagasc's Drystock Knowledge Transfer Department. He took over from Bernard Smyth who retired. Pearse will lead a team of beef and sheep specialists in the organisation. He will be working closely with Michael Gottstein, who has taken up the position of Head of Sheep Knowledge Transfer in Teagasc, following the retirement of Michael McHugh.

Pearse Kelly is an Agricultural Science graduate from UCD and he also holds a Masters in Reproductive Physiology from University College Dublin. He holds a Certificate in Education and Training from the National University of Ireland, Galway and a Higher Diploma in Farm Financial Management from the Waterford Institute of Technology. He is a past president of the Irish Grassland Association. A native of Arklow, in County Wicklow, Pearse is well known to farmers having worked as a beef specialist in Teagasc for the past 14 years.

He previously lectured in the Teagasc Kildalton Agricultural College in Kilkenny.

The low profitability on drystock farms is a challenge and increasing the beef and sheep output on these farms is one of the main priorities identified by Pearse when he took up the position. He sees the discussion group schemes for farmers as a success for both the farmers participating and the advisers facilitating the groups, helping to focus on the key issues driving output on drystock farms.



Pearse Kelly, newly-appointed as Head of Teagasc's Drystock Knowledge Transfer Department



Michael Gottstein, Head of Sheep Knowledge Transfer in Teagasc

Time to review scrapie testing levy

CSA has said that the costs associated with scrapie monitoring need to be re-examined in light of the fact that the incidence of the disease is minuscule and falling. To date, in 2013, there have been only 6 sheep which tested positive for scrapie and the final figure for 2012 was 10 (see table).

However, in order to find the 10 animals (involving 6 flocks) in 2010, we tested 21,435 sheep. This works out at a hit rate of 0.05%. Moreover, some of these animals are believed to have had atypical scrapie which is believed to be non-transmissible and possibly random. In other words, it is not considered to pose a risk to human health.

It's also worth noting that the figures are considerably lower than a few years ago. In 2006, there were 123 sheep, coming from 37 flocks which tested positive and in 2007, the figures were 81 positive sheep coming from 19 flocks.

Farmers however are getting increasingly concerned at all

unnecessary costs. Levies on sheep slaughtered at meat plants have always been an issue. The scrapie levy costs around 70c/ adult sheep (over 18 months) and this is in addition to 50c for the Department of Agriculture, 25c for Bord Bia, 7c for Sheep Ireland and €1.27 for SRM disposal. All of this adds up and applies regardless of the value of the sheep. In the case of older mountain ewes the levies can take a considerable chunk of the final price where kill out can be poor and price can be as low as €1.60/kg carcass.

What is worse is that the Department says that the scrapie levy is a matter for the meat factories who apparently have some discretion on how much is levied.



ICSA sheep chair Paul Brady and ICSA president Gabriel Gilmartin, at last year's ICSA National Sheep Conference

This cannot be allowed to go on. ICSA believes that it is time for a re-think of the whole scrapie monitoring process and a key issue must be to reduce all this futile testing which is another example of creating unnecessary

work at the farmers' expense.

It would be necessary to get EU agreement to reduce substantially the level of testing but surely it is high time that the 70c levy on ewes etc is dismantled.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (to date)
Flocks restricted	37	19	10	13	8	8	9	6
Scrapie-positive animals	123	81	20	38	9	40	10	6
Total animals tested	59,025	46,565	23,068	21,055	21,425	21,169	21,435	No data
Percentage of tested animals scrapie-positive	0.21%	0.17%	0.09%	0.18%	0.04%	0.19%	0.05%	-



Teagasc National Beef Conference

Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny,

Wednesday, 9 October

This national conference will look at dairy calf to beef systems. It will explore the opportunities for producing beef from the male offspring of the dairy herd. The use of traditional beef breeds like Aberdeen Angus and Hereford on the dairy herd will also be discussed.

Topics covered will include:

- Bull versus steer finishing systems
- Heifer finishing
- Farmer's experience
- Latest Teagasc research from Grange and Johnstown Castle
- Markets for beef - Processors and supermarkets perspectives

BTAP qualifying event



Registration: 9.30

Conference fee: €50

For further details contact: loreto.ferguson@teagasc.ie



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County Focus: Farming in Kerry

IN A NEW FEATURE EVERY QUARTER, DRYSTOCK FARMER WILL TAKE AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT FARMERS AND FARMING IN A PARTICULAR COUNTY. IN THIS EDITION, WE TRAVEL TO CO. KERRY TO SPEAK TO FARMERS THERE AND FIND OUT MORE ABOUT DRYSTOCK FARMING IN THE PICTURESQUE SOUTH WEST OF IRELAND.



Eoin Ryan

Eoin Ryan farms 55 Limousin cross sucklers at Mastergeehy, near Caherciveen in South Kerry, selling the calves at weaning. He also runs a one-man agri-contracting operation. Having invested heavily in new buildings, Eoin is actively engaged in expansion and hopes to have 80-100 cows in two to three years' time. "At the moment, I'm running at a rate of 1lu/hectare. I could push that up a bit but it would leave very little margin for when times get tough, such as the fodder crisis. A lot of people around here have cut their stocking rates a bit to make sure that they're better prepared for a bad year."

Eoin says that on a good day, farming in Kerry is one of the best jobs in the world, but there are a lot of issues that need to

be addressed where possible. "The cost of inputs is a major problem. Feed, fuel and fertiliser have risen hugely. Fertility is being compromised because lads aren't putting out as much fertiliser as is needed due to cost, which is having an impact on income. It's a crazy situation."

Fragmentation and the huge hidden costs associated with farming across a number of land parcels is also a serious problem in the area, according to Eoin, who is farming across three separate holdings. "Related to that is the issue of land availability, and then the issue of access to credit when a bit of land does come on the market. It makes expansion very difficult but worse than that, I would say it's impossible for a young farmer starting out with either a small holding or no land at all. Young farmers don't really have a chance to get going here."

Eoin also has concerns about the knock-on impacts of an ageing farming population. "There is a lot of farming and local expertise in the older generation that is simply being lost, without a younger generation to pass it on to. I'm also worried that the land base here is becoming slowly under-used and essential land-improvement work is not being carried out. This part of the world badly needs a strong structure put in place



A view from the top of the Ballahasheen Pass, close to where Eoin Ryan farms.



Some of Eoin Ryan's LMX weanlings

to make it easier for young, ambitious farmers to get going."

What is the key to securing the future of farming in Kerry? "Getting a good price for your produce is the crucial factor. That would automatically increase the quality of the cattle produced. For that reason, I am against the idea of coupled payments on a per-head basis. Quality of animals, not quantity, is crucial."



Michael Brady

Michael Brady, ICSA's Kerry chairman, farms on land he purchased in 2003 near Kilflynn, north of Tralee, having settled in the area from his native Meath. He operates a herd comprising a mixture of pedigree Charolais cows and their progeny, commercial cows, and bought in weanlings and heifers. He is also a busy farm advisor, with his company, Newfield Agricultural and Environmental Advisory Services, serving the Munster region for the last 15 years.

Michael says that the capacity of the land to carry cows has been a huge determinant on stocking levels. "At the moment, I'm closely monitoring the costs and profits from the suckler cows and depending on that, I would be open to increasing the number of heifers I

carry and reducing the suckler numbers. The cost of keeping the cow is creeping up and up."

He notes that there is a "depressed feeling" about the suckler industry at the moment, which he attributes to the severe difficulties of the last two years. "I have a worry about the market for my pedigree bulls towards the back end of this year."

The other costs involved in farming are a cause of concern also. "I calculated recently that it was costing me about €30 a week in the winter time to run the loading shovel. That's just one example of the hidden costs that you might not even think about on a day-to-day basis. The price of inputs at the moment is definitely one of the biggest challenges facing farmers."

That includes the price of feed going forward. Michael believes that the key to making a profit from beef animals lies in keeping a very close eye on liveweight gain per day. "The Charolais cattle fit the bill on this land for that reason."

Having had to purchase all of his land, Michael is keenly aware of the prohibitive nature of both land price and the credit situation. "Here in North Kerry, you are in competition with dairy farmers for every bit of land that becomes available. That is a



Some of Michael Brady's heifers, with Tursillagh Windfarm in the background



Michael Brady rears pedigree Charolais bulls for show & sale events

huge disadvantage for drystock farmers. On top of that, it's incredibly difficult to access credit, even if you have no other borrowings. There is huge talk of expansion into the future but on the other hand, it is extremely difficult to get on the farming ladder or to expand once you're on it."

KERRY STATISTICS

Cattle:

No. of herds: **6,232**
Ave. herd size: **48.2**
Total cattle: **300,492**

Calves Born to Beef Bulls in 2012:

Male	Female	Total
40,662	38,430	72,092

Breed Profile of Herd:

FR	HE	CH	LM	SI	AA	BB	Other	Total
156,095	19,865	28,351	38,986	7,466	22,058	9,088	18,583	300,492

Sheep:

No. of flocks: **2,292**
Ave. flock size: **133**
Breeding ewes >12 mths old: **226,778**
Rams: **5,940**
Other sheep: **71,971**
Total Sheep: **304,698**

Sources: AIM Bovine Statistics Report 2012 / National Sheep & Goat Census 2012



Pat Downing

Pat Downing runs a sheep enterprise in the Black Valley, near Moll's Gap, Killarney, and also keeps about a dozen beef animals - a mixture of Charolais, Simmental, Belgian Blue and Limousins. Farming on some very steep mountain land, he runs 220 ewes and sells around 200 lambs in September. "I sell all my lambs in Kenmare mart - we are too far away from any factories here to sell direct to the factory."

The price of lambs this year is a problem, Pat says. "The price is way down and the cost of inputs has increased at phenomenal rate. We'd need to be getting at least €3/

kg liveweight for a decent return." On the issue of the cost of inputs, Pat says that living and working in the heart of South Kerry doesn't help: "Almost everything that we need - fertiliser, etc. - has to be brought down here via costly transport. It definitely is a disadvantage compared to more accessible parts of the country. I would see a strong need for some effort to be made to reduce the cost of fuel, diesel in particular. Fertiliser is also an awful price at the moment and it is definitely affecting production levels around here."

Pat echoes Eoin Ryan's sentiments on the difficulties facing young farmers who are either starting off or who want to expand the operation they already have. "If a young farmer has no home place to take over, I would think that it's next to impossible for them to get a bit of land around here to get going on. If land does become available, and it is very scarce, then they're presented with a massive obstacle by the banks in relation to credit. The same problems face those hoping to expand - and it is fairly clear that expanding and building up a decent holding



Some of Pat Downing's flock on his farm in the Black Valley



Steep fields are a feature of the Black Valley

is the only way to make a living."

There are very few full-time farmers in South Kerry, according to Pat. "An off-farm income or a spouse's income is absolutely crucial around here."

Bovine TB & Wildlife Issues - News Roundup

Geoff Hamilton
ICSA Policy Officer

AT HOME:

Badger vaccination trial rollout - Here in the Ireland, the TB-related control of badgers has been ongoing for many years, and in the main, herd incidence of bovine TB has steadily fallen year-on-year. Since 2000, the number of reactors has fallen from 39,847 to 18,476 in 2012. In an effort to further reduce the impact of 'wildlife reservoir' TB, the Department of Agriculture has recently embarked on a series of field trials investigating the efficacy of TB vaccination for badgers, where animals are trapped, sedated and orally dispensed a vaccine dose; this research aims to inform whether a more extensive programme can be rolled out using vaccine-containing bait and reduce or eliminate the need for future culling of badgers. Some of these 4-year trials in parts of Louth, Monaghan, Galway, Longford, Tipperary, Cork and Waterford are already underway, with the rest to begin in 2014. ICSA wish to remind farmers that badgers remain a protected species and

can only be controlled by dedicated staff operating under strict licensing conditions controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The killing of badgers or any disturbance of a sett without license is an offence punishable under the Wildlife Act.

Other factors in localised TB hotspots - ICSA welcomes the ongoing efforts being made by the Department to working towards the eventual elimination of bovine TB in the country but wishes to highlight concerns over a one-size-fits-all approach. As an example, while badger culling can definitely be related to the overall national reduction in bovine TB incidence, there still exist localised areas where TB remains a significant problem, despite ongoing badger control. Anecdotal evidence from farmers in these areas (such as East Wicklow and South Donegal) suggests that deer could potentially be part of the problem, particularly where large populations can build up in commercial forestry plantations. The Department's stated position is that deer are not a significant problem, and that infected deer are a product



ICSA Rural Development Chair John Barron on his farm in Ballintra, overlooking a 'TB hotspot' region of high herd TB incidence

of badger and cattle infection, not a cause of it. However, the maps shown here suggest that TB incidence remains stubbornly high where the main deer populations are found. ICSA has a number of meetings scheduled with Department representatives in the near future, and will be highlighting this issue as part of any future TB management policy being drafted by the Government. ICSA Rural Development Chairman John Barron said, "While the national reduction in herd TB incidence is to be welcomed, more needs to be done by the Department in response to localised TB hotspots".

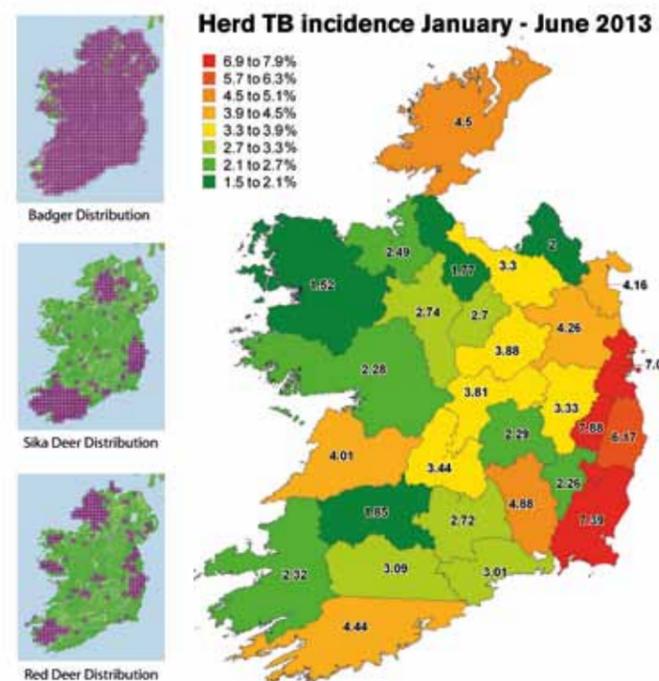
AND ABROAD:

UK Badger Cull Trials - There has been considerable (and occasionally sensational) media coverage in recent weeks in relation to the start of badger culling in the southwest of England. The six-week culling trial operated by trained and licensed marksmen, which is to take place in parts of Somerset and Gloucestershire, aims to remove up to 5,000 badgers (50 animals per day). The trials are being carried out in these regions (where there are a high number of TB infections in cattle) to assess whether badgers can be culled humanely, safely and effectively.

England, unlike Ireland, has not operated an ongoing programme of badger control in the past few decades. Since the 1980s, the numerical incidence of TB in cattle in England has increased exponentially and the disease has spread geographically outwards from its original concentration in southwest England.

The English trials will not aim to assess to what degree bovine TB infection can be reduced, but simply seek to establish how humane this specific badger culling approach is, how efficient is the shooting methodology and if there is a public safety issue to be addressed. Results of the trial will inform UK Ministers on any plans to extend the culling pilot to other parts of England.

Alternative UK TB management models - Meanwhile, the Welsh Assembly Government has taken a completely alternative approach and has chosen to vaccinate badgers via a BCG injection, with trials underway in North Pembrokeshire; the cost of vaccinating a single badger is put at £662. In Northern Ireland, final preparations are being made for a pilot control scheme in two areas of County Down where badgers are to be captured, vaccinated and released if healthy, and destroyed if found to be infected with TB.



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ICSA Summer Farm Walks



1. Ger Dineen hosted a suckler walk at his farm at Kilnamartyra, Macroom, Co. Cork on 22nd June
2. Some of the Parthenaise, Limousine and Blonde D'Aquitaine stock on display at the farm of Percy and Carmel Kingston, Gracedieu, Co. Waterford, where a farm walk was held on 25th of May.
3. Andrew Armstrong (facing the crowd) of Kinnitty, Co. Offaly, addresses visitors to his farm on 25th July

ICSA & See Change partnership at the Ploughing

Changing minds about mental health one conversation at a time



In association with



ICSA's continuing partnership with See Change: We will be distributing these cards along with See Change at this year's Ploughing Championships

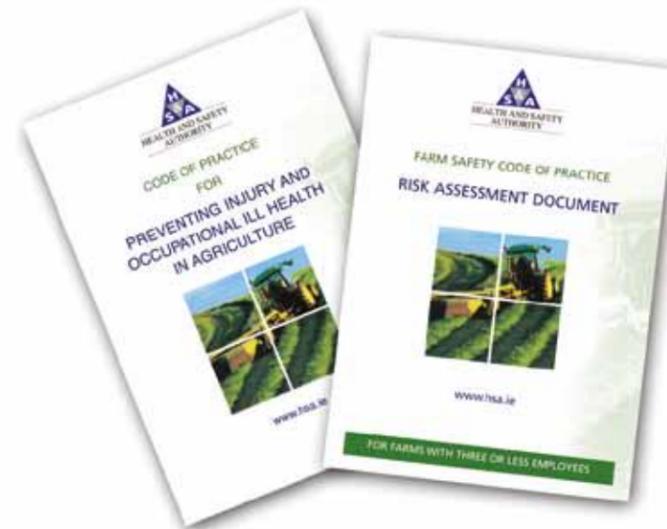
ICSA at Cork Summer Show



Munster vice president John Halley and West Cork chair and national suckler chair Dermot Kelleher at ICSA's stand at the Cork Summer Show, held at Curraheen on 15th & 16th June.



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